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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

1.   (currently amended)   An inventory agent for a component audit and inventory management system, ~~the inventory agent being used in a target device accessible to a data network,~~ the inventory agent comprising executable code for implementing:

a receiver including means for receiving an inventory-commence message from a client computer ~~through the~~over a data network;

a detector including means for ~~detecting~~collecting hardware and software inventory data relating to hardware and software installed on a ~~associated with the~~target device in response to commands included in the inventory-commence message; and

a transmitter including means for transmitting to a host unit of the component audit and inventory management system, through the data network, an inventory-data message including the inventory data associated with the target device.

2.   (currently amended)   An inventory agent as claimed in claim 1, wherein the receiver ~~compares~~includes means for comparing the identity of the inventory-commence message with the identity of the inventory agent.

3.   (currently amended)   An inventory agent as claimed in claim 2, wherein the inventory agent ~~terminates~~includes means for terminating the inventory ~~request~~data collection if the identity of the inventory-commence message is not associated with the identity of the inventory agent.

4.   (currently amended)   An inventory agent as claimed in claim 1, wherein ~~the inventory agent is unaccessible to the data network at time of transmission of~~the inventory-commence message ~~and wherein the inventory agent receives the inventory-commence message upon re-access to the data network~~ is an electronic mail message retrievable by the target device when it connects to the data network.

5.   (currently amended)   An inventory agent as claimed in claim 1, wherein the inventory-commence message receipt, inventory data collection ~~detection~~, and inventory-data message transmission are transparent to ~~require no involvement by~~ a user of the target device.

6.   (cancelled)

7.   (currently amended)   An inventory agent as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ~~inventory agent saves compiled~~ collected inventory data is saved directly to a file in executable language statements for incorporation into a database.

8.   (original)   An inventory agent as claimed in claim 7, wherein the executable language statements include ~~Structure~~ Structured Query Language (SQL) statements.

9.   (cancelled)

10.   (cancelled)

11.   (cancelled)

12.   (cancelled)

13.   (cancelled)

14.   (cancelled)

15.   (cancelled)

16.   (cancelled)

17.   (cancelled)

18.   (cancelled)

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19.   (cancelled)

20.   (cancelled)

21.   (cancelled)

22.   (cancelled)

23.   (cancelled)

24.   (cancelled)

25.   (cancelled)

26.   (cancelled)

27.   (cancelled)

28.   (cancelled)

29.   (cancelled)

30.   (cancelled)

31.   (cancelled)

32.   (cancelled)

33.   (currently amended)   A component audit and inventory management system comprising:

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a host unit, ~~for use~~ resident in a host computer ~~accessible to a data network~~, the host computer comprising a processor, memory, and user interface; and

a host message handling system operatively connected to the host unit and accessible to a data network;

the host unit including:

~~an inventory agent for use in a target device accessible to the data network, wherein the host unit comprises:~~

~~a transmitter for transmitting to a client computer, via the data network, an inventory-commence message for activating the inventory agent; and~~

~~a receiver~~ means for receiving, ~~via the data network, messages from the inventory agent; and~~ a request-inventory message from a client computer via the host message handling system,

~~the inventory agent comprises:~~

~~a receiver for receiving the~~ means for generating an inventory-commence message in response to the request-inventory message, and for forwarding the inventory-commence message to ~~from~~ the client computer via the host message handling system ~~through the data network~~;

~~a detector for detecting inventory data associated with the target device; and~~

~~a transmitter for transmitting to the host unit through the data network an inventory-data message including the inventory data associated with the target device~~

means for receiving hardware and software inventory data associated with hardware and software installed on a target device associated with the client and collected electronically from the target device, the inventory data having been collected by an inventory agent installed on the target device and activated by the inventory-commence message; and

means for aggregating inventory data from a plurality of target devices associated with the client.

34.   (cancelled)

35.   (new) The inventory management system of claim 33, wherein the inventory-
commence message comprises:

an identifier including means for verifying the identity of the inventory agent installed on
the target device; and

a trigger including means for causing the inventory agent to commence collecting
inventory data from the target device.

36.   (new) The inventory management system of claim 35, wherein the inventory-
commence message further includes an install-catalyst means including means for initiating
download of a new inventory agent from the host unit if the identifier fails to verify the identity
of the inventory agent.

37.   (new) The inventory management system of claim 35, wherein the inventory-
commence message further includes a sequential pulse number.

38.   (new) The inventory management system of claim 33, wherein the inventory agent is
resident on the target device as a software agent and comprises executable code for
implementing:

a receiver including means for receiving an inventory-commence message from the
client computer over the data network;

a detector including means for collecting hardware and software inventory data
associated with the target device in response to the inventory-commence message; and

a transmitter including means for transmitting to the host unit, via the data network, an
inventory-data message including the inventory data associated with the target device.

39.   (new) The inventory management system of claim 38, wherein the receiver includes
means for comparing the identity of the inventory-commence message with the identity of the
inventory agent.

40.   (new) The inventory management system of claim 39, wherein the inventory agent
includes means for terminating the inventory data collection if the identity of the inventory-
commence message is not associated with the identity of the inventory agent.

41.   (new)   The inventory management system of claim 38, wherein the inventory-commence message is an electronic mail message retrievable by the target device when it connects to the data network.

42.   (new)   The inventory management system of claim 38, wherein the inventory-commence message receipt, inventory data collection, and inventory-data message transmission are invisible to a user of the target device.

43.   (new)   The inventory management system of claim 38, wherein the collected inventory data is saved directly to a file in executable language statements for incorporation into a database associated with the host unit.

44.   (new)   The inventory management system of claim 38, wherein the executable language statements include Structured Query Language (SQL) statements.

45.   (new)   The inventory management system of claim 43, wherein the host unit includes means for interpreting the executable language statements as command line statements.

46.   (new)   The inventory management system of claim 33, further including means for forwarding the aggregated inventory data to the client via the host message handling system.

47.   (new)   The inventory management system of claim 33, further including a migration analysis engine.

48.   (new)   The inventory management system of claim 33, further including a replacement analysis engine.